

EXPLORE **m** MINNESOTA™

# ANNUAL REPORT

2015

#ONLYINMNE





## A Message From The Director

#ONLYINMN

Greetings,

2015 was a great year for Explore Minnesota, and the state's tourism industry as a whole. Lodging properties had their **best summer since 2008**, new businesses popped up everywhere, and events drew large crowds.

In the second year of the popular #OnlyinMN campaign, we generated **3.2 million trips** to Minnesota and more than **\$337 million in traveler spending**. We engaged hundreds of thousands of people through social media, more than ever before. And we made a big splash in cities like Chicago and Denver with cutting-edge PR and advertising efforts.

On top of all this, we reached an **all-time record private sector match of \$9 million** to further our marketing reach. Our co-ops and partnerships grew to new heights.

Internationally, Minnesota continued to grow as a global destination. We worked with you, with multi-state groups and with Brand USA to promote state tourism to markets from **Mexico to Canada to the U.K.** Last year was my first year as a member of the **Brand USA** board, and it has been amazing to see the opportunities to market Minnesota in ways we cannot do alone.

We continued our group tour efforts, substantially increased our public relations, and engaged with millions of consumers through welcome centers, at trade shows and online, with a **record number of visitors to our website**.

As successful as these efforts were, we want to be even better in 2016 and beyond. We held listening sessions throughout Minnesota to hear from all of you, and worked with staff and our Tourism Council on a new **two-year strategic plan**, which you can view here.

The following 2015 Annual Report gives you a very quick look back at some of the things we accomplished this past year. Take a look and let us know what you think.

Thank you for all of your hard work this past year bringing both new and returning travelers to our great state and ensuring they leave with smiles on their faces. Minnesota would not be the amazing destination that it is without you.

Here's to another great year ahead!

Sincerely,

John F. Edman, Director



# Economic Impact of Minnesota Tourism



The general fund operating budget for fiscal years 2014-15:

**\$14.088**  
Million Annually\*

\*Includes \$500,000 in supplemental state funding available when private sector support generated by Explore Minnesota is at least \$3 million. **Explore Minnesota generated a record amount of match dollars in FY15**

Private Industry  
**Match**

Cash **\$2.8 million**  
In-kind **\$6.2 million**  
Total **\$9 million**

2004  
**\$10**

2009  
**\$11**

2014  
**\$13.6**



growth in **Billions**

sales at leisure and hospitality businesses **grew 37% from 2004 to 2014**, including 5% annual growth for 2014.

(Note: data not available yet for 2015)

Percentage of  
**Budget**



**SALES**

Grow gross receipts/sales of tourism in Minnesota

Leisure & hospitality  
**\$13.6 billion**  
gross sales annually  
More than \$37 million a day



**REVENUE**

Generate state and local sales tax revenue from tourism

State sales tax  
**\$878 million**  
generated annually  
17% of all state sales tax revenues



**JOBS**

Increase leisure & hospitality employment in Minnesota

Total payroll: \$4.7 billion  
**254,400 jobs**  
size of employment  
11% of total private sector

(Note: data not available yet for 2015)



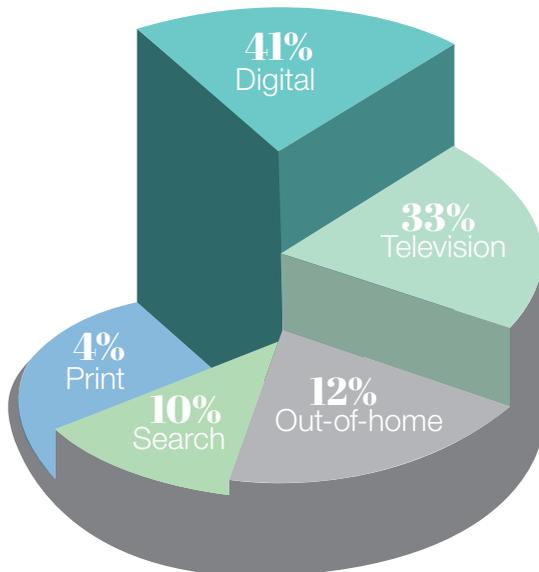
# #OnlyinMN Campaign

Continued the **very successful** **#ONLYINMN** campaign Throughout **Midwest, Denver Kansas City and Chicago**

Generated **\$337.4 Million** in traveler spending



## Advertising Media



- Summer advertising included murals in Denver and Chicago, innovative outdoor projection in the Twin Cities, two new television spots also shown at Mall of America Theaters, and numerous interactive mobile and digital efforts



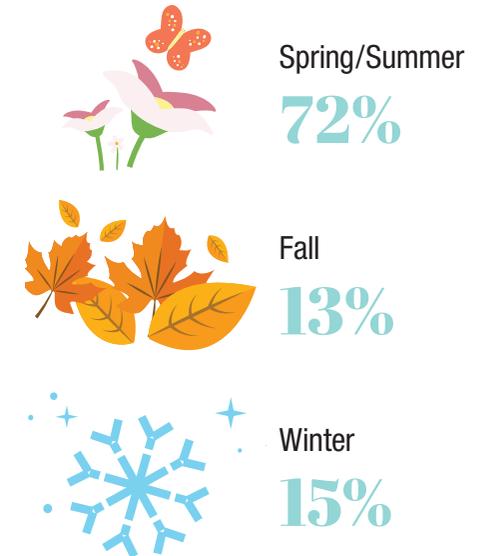
- Summer and fall included streaming radio ads on Pandora plus traditional radio spots, TV spots on Twins and Brewers baseball broadcasts and paid social efforts

- Implemented Minnesota Wine Escapes partnership with Minnesota Farm Winery Association and Minnesota Grown. Worked with Lt. Gov. Tina Smith on Minnesota Brewer and Vinter Day at the State Fair

- Promoted fishing with Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and KARE11 TV



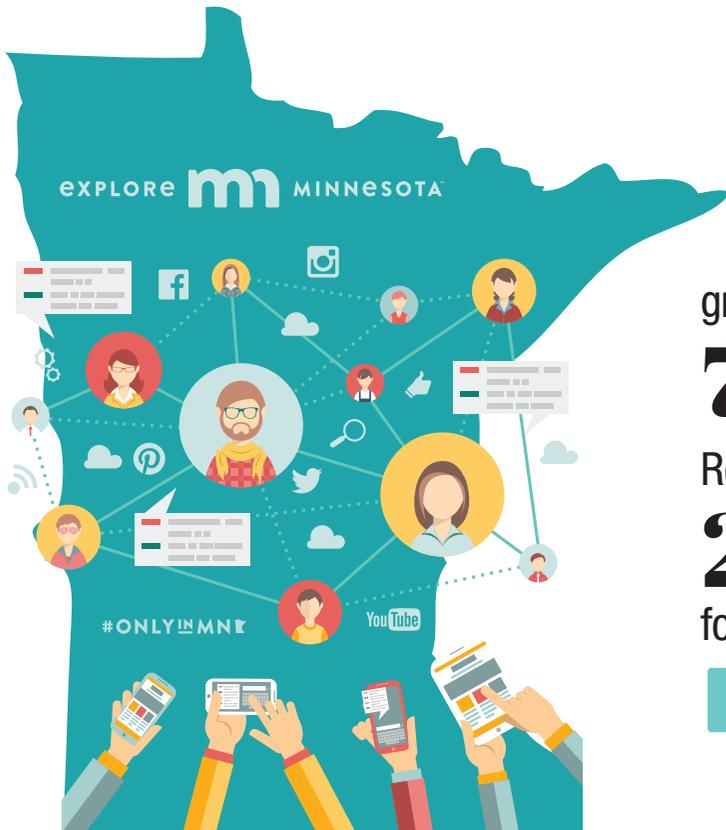
- Offered an unprecedented 40 co-op advertising opportunities for the tourism industry at reduced rates in all seasons and in select niche markets



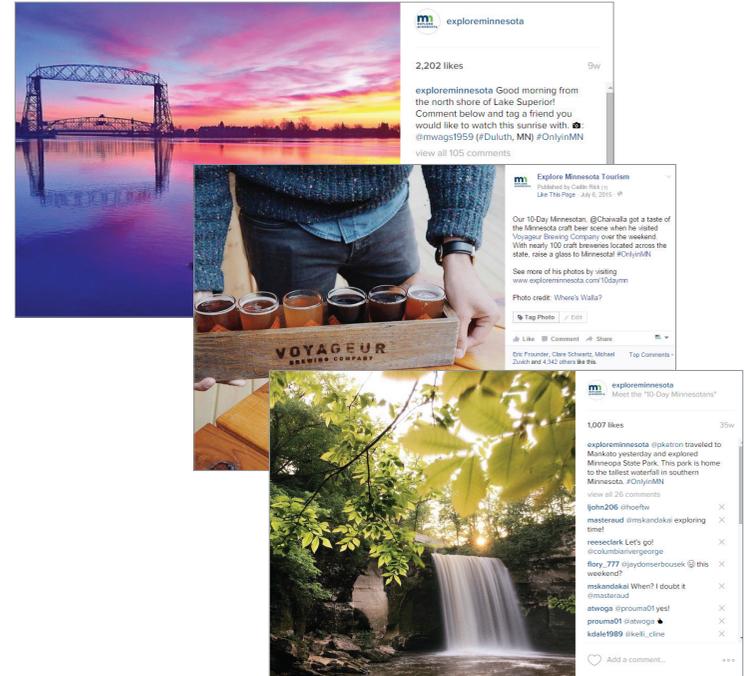
## Marketing Partners



# Social Media



grew audience by  
**71%**  
 Reached more than  
**239,000**  
 followers



Increased Instagram  
 audience by  
**293%**

Nearly 20 million people  
 generated  
**126 million**  
 impressions on  
 Twitter



Generated nearly  
**147,500**  
 uses of the hashtag  
**#ONLYINMN**  
 Potential reach  
**11 million**  
 people

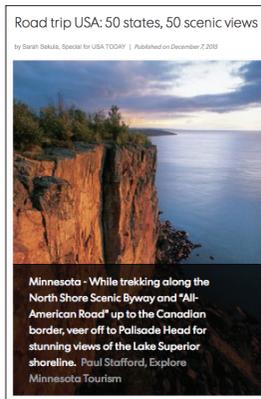


Prominent social media  
 influencers toured the state as

**TEN DAY**  
*minnesotans*

Generated  
**37 million**  
 impressions

Generated **roughly**  
**1 Billion**  
 earned media impressions via  
 internal and agency public relations  
**High profile placements**



**Customers served 2015**

Website visits

**4.5 Million**

At Welcome Centers

**2.6 Million**

E-newsletter subscribers

**156,000**

Mail and digital inquiries

**45,000**

Website brochure requests

**31,000**

Telephone inquiries

**4,700**

## Quality information for travelers

- Drove record web traffic to [exploreminnesota.com](http://exploreminnesota.com)
- Inspired travel with monthly e-newsletter and weekly e-mail updates on events, fishing, fall colors, winter trails and more to a qualified, opt-in audience
- Served on-the-road travelers at Welcome Centers and wide network of affiliated centers, and provided printed materials at Mall of America, MSP Airport and Union Depot



Promoted Minnesota destinations through Minnesota Travel Guide

**300,000**  
 distributed



Offered seasonal trip ideas through Minnesota Explorer travel newspaper, published in partnership with Star Tribune

**1.5 Million**  
 copies distributed

**ASK THE EXPERTS**  
*Get help planning your trip*

Want to know the best spots in Minnesota? How about tips on how to make the most of your time in a specific city? Our Minnesota experts can answer your questions, offer advice, or plan the perfect Minnesota trip for you. For free.

888-VISITMN | Email | Live Chat | @exploreminn

Provided customized

**1-on-1**

travel planning services via phone, email and live chat

# Industry Outreach

Conducted  
**Governor's  
Opener events**



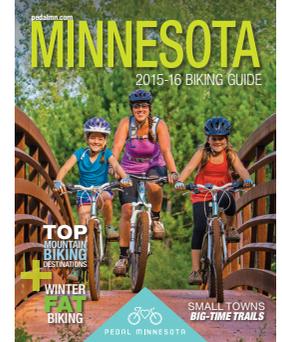
in conjunction with DNR, host communities and other partners

Awarded  
**\$594,166 in Grants**  
funding to  
**90 tourism & Scenic Byway** organizations



Hosted  
**PedalMN**

**Bike Summit**  
Produced two-year edition of the *Minnesota Bike Guide*, provided bike maintenance at five events in coordination with **HealthPartners**, and integrated **PedalMN** website into **exploreminnesota.com**



Produced  
**4 Sports  
Marketing videos**



Sponsored at  
**2 National  
Conferences**

(NASC & Connect) and an annual event for sports planners

**m Meet in  
MINNESOTA™**

Implementing a multi-year, major event sponsorship with the **American Society of Association Executives** to increase Minnesota's visibility as a destination for meetings and conferences.

Coordinated **Meet in Minnesota** sponsorship at Connect



Coordinated participation in **Destination Capitol Hill** efforts to influence national tourism policy

**Participated in TEAMS**

Sponsored  
**U.S Quad Rugby**

Association Sectionals in St. Paul

Held annual tourism conference at the St. Paul River Centre and hosted the **Minnesota House Job Growth & Energy Affordability Policy and Finance Committee meeting**

## Market Development

### Hosted **VIP golf event** in London to promote golf in Minnesota and the **2016 Ryder Cup**

Coordinated marketing activities with in-country representation firms in  
**China, France & Mexico**  
new/emerging markets for Minnesota



### Published **2015 Minnesota** **Group & Packaged Travel Planner** highlighting Minnesota's history

- Hosted several international media familiarization tours, which generated significant media coverage in countries including the Nordic countries, Germany and the U.K.
- House a database of more than 300 domestic tour operators who offer Minnesota trips, ranging from day trips to multi-day tours of the state

### International Visitation

**258,000 international visitors** not including Canada

Majority of visitors from Europe and Asia, including the **U.K., China, Germany and Mexico**

**2 Million Canadian visitors**

(Note: 2014 data; not available yet for 2015)

## Timely Research

Conducted study on the  
**return on investment**  
of Explore Minnesota tourism marketing

Collaborated with  
**Department of Revenue**  
on reporting of leisure and hospitality sales tax data used to track industry performance

Surveyed  
**Lodging business & campgrounds**  

on expectations and results of summer tourism business, revealing **Minnesota accommodations** experienced their best summer since 2008

Tracked lodging industry performance through  
**Smith Travel Research**  
with Minnesota experiencing **annual growth in all six lodging metrics**

#ONLYINMN

For more details on Explore Minnesota  
marketing and programs, go to:  
[industry.exploreminnesota.com](http://industry.exploreminnesota.com)

**Explore Minnesota Tourism**

121 Seventh Place East, Suite 100

St. Paul, MN 55101-2146

651-757-1848 888-VISITMN

EXPLORE **mn** MINNESOTA™

